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Markets, Globalization & Development Review



Can Luxury Fashion Provide a Roadmap for Sustainability?

Introduction

Most widely used definition of sustainability is ‘meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (Brundtland Report 1987, p. 8). Therefore, sustainability can be considered as “an activity that can be continued indefinitely without causing harm” (Joy et al. 2012 p. 274), incorporating economic profitability, respect for the environment and social responsibility (Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2014). In the area of fashion, Fletcher (2012) defines sustainable fashion as “*fashion that fosters ecological integrity and social quality through products, practices of use and relationships*”. However, fashion industry is one of the prominent industries in the world with critical negative impacts on the social and ecological environments (Beard 2008; Fletcher 2008; Jia et al. 2015; McRobbie 1997; Morgan and Birtwistle 2009). It is among the most polluting and contaminating industries due to the heavy use of chemicals and extensive use of non-renewable resources (Pedersen and Andersen 2015). Due to tragedies such as the Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh on April 24, 2013, killing over 1,100 garment workers and injuring more than 2,200, and documentaries like *The True Cost*, which reveals the dark side of the fast fashion industry (Ozdamar-Ertekin 2017), consumers have become more conscious about their purchases. More and more consumers nowadays criticize the production of large amounts of low-cost products to stimulate excessive consumption. They question the people and the processes involved in the making of their clothes; and demand higher transparency of fashion businesses’ operations (Arrigo 2015).

In line with the growing consumer passion for sustainability issues, sustainability and ethical conduct have begun to matter in fashion industry over the past decade (Moisander and Personen 2002). On the other hand, fashion constitutes a very complex and fragmented industry, where artisan tailors, haute couture, multinational fashion retailers and luxury corporations co-exist (Arrigo 2015). The currently dominant model, which is “fast fashion,” refers to low-cost clothing collections that imitate the current luxury fashion trends (Joy et al. 2012 p. 273). Therefore, fast fashion retailers help consumers who aspire to wear luxury fashion brands but cannot afford them, to fulfill their desires by offering them similar styles

at affordable prices. However, companies started to realize that this affordable and trend-sensitive fashion, while being profitable, also raises ethical and environmental concerns (Aspers and Skov 2006; Ozdamar-Ertekin and Atik 2015). Hence, the pillars of fast fashion, which are speed, affordability, change, disposable trends and aesthetic fads, contradict with sustainability goals and practices (Ozdamar-Ertekin and Atik 2015).

Luxury fashion, on the other hand, emphasizes longevity, durability, authenticity, unique design aesthetic, craftsmanship and quality (Fionda and Moore 2009; Hennings et al. 2013; Joy et al. 2012) and can thereby be better associated with sustainability. Therefore, researchers have begun to address the relationship between sustainability and luxury fashion (e.g. Achabou and Dekhili 2013; Arrigo 2015; Godart 2015; Godart and Seong 2017; Hennigs et al. 2013). In this regard, the aim of this conceptual paper is to discuss if luxury fashion brands and retailers can overcome some of the problems that fast fashion creates and if they can initiate change towards a more sustainable fashion system by fostering values of sustainability. In the following sections, the paper first discusses the relationship between fashion and sustainability and assesses how the values of luxury fashion align with sustainability. It provides examples of luxury fashion brands that both support and contradict sustainability goals and principles. Then, it addresses the challenges and skepticism about the relationship of luxury fashion and sustainability. To conclude, on the basis of conflicting views, the study critically evaluates the role of luxury fashion towards a better and a more sustainable fashion system.

Fashion and Sustainability

Due to the socio-environmental problems, sustainability has received more and more attention in the last decades. It has become a vital aspect for businesses as companies became target for public criticism and accusations. Therefore, there is an increasing pressure to fulfill social and environmental responsibilities, along with achieving economic goals (Arrigo 2015). The fashion industry has become more serious about sustainability as well.

“We've entered 2019 with a marketplace hungry to create a more environmentally-conscious fashion landscape and, ultimately, to design a sustainable end-to-end retail economy” (Lewittes 2019).

Many companies started to shift towards more environmentally friendly materials and reduce the amount of toxins in their manufacturing

processes. Ethical fashion movements, such as 'Slow Fashion', have appeared along with sustainable considerations (Kim et al. 2013). Greater transparency and more socially responsible approaches across the whole supply chain have become more common (Strategic Direction 2017). Clothing brands started to take actions to support corporate sustainability such as the creation of sustainability work teams, or the development of sustainability programs, and the publication of sustainability reports (Kozlowski et al. 2015). In fact, corporate sustainability has emerged as a new managerial model based on stakeholder relationships and the capacity to integrate economic, social and environmental issues into strategic business operations (Perrini and Vurro 2010).

Shannon Lohr, who launched her sustainable fashion startup accelerator Factory45 in 2014, explains how sustainability has evolved in the fashion industry since 2010. *"In 2010, there were very few consumers who knew what the phrase 'sustainable fashion' meant. Less than a decade later, while it's still a niche market, there is more awareness around what 'sustainable fashion' is all about"* (Lewittes 2019). Therefore, increasing supply chain transparency is vital for brands to build trust with these conscious shoppers (Lewittes 2019). On the other hand, as the global fashion supply chain is highly fragmented and complex, it is difficult for fashion manufacturing to become transparent (Mihm 2010). Furthermore, most fashion entrepreneurs and emerging designers do not have the financial or human capital necessary to gain access to the supply chain and sourcing management tools, which are necessary to build a truly eco-conscious and transparent brand (Lewittes 2019). In such a crowded fashion marketplace, it is critical to evaluate where fast fashion and luxury fashion brands stand in shaping the sustainability conversation and moving towards a more sustainable fashion system.

Fast Fashion and Sustainability Relationship

Fast fashion by its nature is a quick response system that encourages speed and disposability (Fletcher 2008; Ozdamar-Ertekin 2016) and embraces obsolescence as a primary goal (Abrahamson 2011). Affordability, low cost, greater variety, speed of availability and constant change of styles and trends are key drivers of success in this system. To achieve this, fast fashion companies have decreased the turnaround time from catwalk to consumer, which was formerly six months, to couple of weeks (Tokatli 2008). Consequently, fast fashion has replaced exclusivity, glamour, originality, and luxury with "massclusivity" (Tokatli 2008). As a result, fast fashion chains have grown faster than the retail fashion industry (Mihm 2010) and typically earn higher profit margins than their

traditional fashion retail counterparts (Sull and Turconi 2008). On the other hand, the fast fashion business model nowadays faces ethical and environmental challenges, such as massive use of natural resources and chemicals damaging the environment, increasing textile waste, and limited transparency of the global supply chain (Beard 2008; Biehl-Missal 2013; Fletcher 2008; Godart 2015; McRobbie 1997; Morgan and Birtwistle 2009; Ozdamar-Ertekin and Atik 2015; Ozdamar-Ertekin 2016).

Even though there are barriers in embracing sustainable fashion and many consumers still value quantity over ethical considerations (Niinimäki 2010), fashion industry is trying to meet the sustainability trend (Godart 2015). Even the fast fashion companies have begun to evaluate the total environmental impact of their goods and some started to re-cycle materials or products, working towards a closed loop system (Arrigo 2015). For example, on its company website, H&M declares to work towards a 100% circular business model, which is about developing solutions to extend lifespan of products (H&M 2017). Similarly, Inditex in its 2017 annual report explains its Closing the Loop program, which seeks to extend the useful life of textile products, encouraging their reuse and recycling (Inditex Annual Report 2017). Furthermore, both H&M's "Conscious Collection" and Zara's "Join Life" Collections are offered along their fast fashion lines. Even though these big fast fashion retailers started to take action regarding sustainability, there is still skepticism towards their intentions that these actions are mainly to avoid public scrutiny in order to prevent potential economic losses or to create new business opportunities (Ozdamar-Ertekin and Atik 2015). For instance, H&M, which is one of the leading high street brands on sustainability, supporting recycling, environmentally-friendly materials and climate positive change, was exposed in 2017 for burning 12 tons of unsold clothing since 2013. In March 2018, when it was reported that H&M was struggling again with \$4.3 billion worth of unsold stock, the brand told the New York Times that the plan was to reduce prices to move the stock, encouraging consumers to buy more (Pinnock 2018).

Consequently, even though the fast fashion companies can copy luxury products, they are less able to meet high ethical standards in sourcing, manufacturing, and distribution, and are less likely to have repair and upgrade services (Joy et al. 2012). As Orsola de Castro (2015), the designer who founded the luxury upcycling label From Somewhere in 1997 states, the current industry based on mass consumption and overproduction has grown far away from the intrinsic values of fashion, especially since this trend for aggressive growth, mass production and fast fashion took over in the early 1980s. Therefore, it is crucial to assess if

luxury fashion is more closely related to the actual, intrinsic values of fashion, which according to de Castro are originality, creativity, heritage, artistry, passion, skills and bravery (Orsola de Castro 2015).

Luxury Fashion as a Potential Solution for Sustainability

In response to the rising consumer demand for sustainable luxury, luxury managers have to enhance the value of luxury brands with respect to superior environmental and social performance (Hennings et al. 2013). Similarly, Kapferer (2010) suggests a deeper examination of luxury and sustainable development to show how luxury and sustainability can converge at least on certain aspects. Therefore, the paper first evaluates the principles and values of luxury that align with sustainability and provides examples of luxury fashion brands that act as initiators of change in supporting sustainability. Then, it discusses the aspects of luxury that contradict with sustainability and the barriers and challenges that luxury fashion brands face with regards to sustainability.

Aligning Values of Luxury Fashion and Sustainability

Consumers often equate luxury fashion with high price, superior quality, prestige and exclusivity (Strategic Direction 2017). Similarly, Danziger (2016) summarizes the essential values of a luxury brand as superior performance, craftsmanship, exclusivity, innovation, sense of place and time, sophistication and design aesthetic, creative expression, relevance, heritage and responsibility. In the following section, the paper evaluates how some of these values align with principles of sustainability.

The aspiration for high quality and superior durability of luxury brands reveals the affiliation between luxury and sustainability (Hennings et al. 2013). Luxury designers and brands are often associated with sustainability because in general luxury products are higher in quality and can be used for longer. Luxury products, such as luxury bags and jewelry, are often inherited through generations (Wiedmann et al. 2007, 2009) and they last for a long time depending on their high quality standards (Hennings et al. 2013). Therefore, durability, which is the core of sustainable development, is also an important aspect of luxury (Kapferer 2010). As sustainability is the ability to continue or be continued for a long time (Oxford Dictionary), longevity is embedded in its definition. Longevity of luxury products is an indication that sustainability is a fundamental attribute (Strategic Direction 2017). As Danziger (2016) states, luxury brands are both timely and timeless, transcending time from the past to the future. Therefore, longevity and long-term value should be an inherent

part of luxury fashion as people buy less of luxury items and keep them for longer. Some consumers consider luxury items as massive investment pieces that they adore (Arrigo 2015). Furthermore, consumers demanding more information about sourcing and manufacturing or consumers who demand unique pieces with higher quality are likely to pay a higher price. On the other hand, when buying fast fashion items consumers often compromise on quality, which undermines sustainability. As Joy et al. underline “durability in fast fashion apparel is the kiss of death” (2012, p.288). Fast fashion companies target a limited product life span. This ‘throwaway’ logic of fast fashion conflicts with sustainability and long-term perspective (Arrigo 2015). Because of their concern for longevity, durability and quality, luxury fashion brands can actually counteract the disposability and waste problem that fast fashion creates.

Furthermore, the ‘dreamlike quality’ of luxury products is often related to craft, authenticity and heritage. Joy et al. (2012) state that this ‘dreamlike quality’ originates from craft ateliers, where generations of artisans have created one-of-a-kind products. Similarly, Tungate (2009) explains that ‘craft’ signifies highly skilled labor, making unique items, which are accessible to only selected customers. For instance, Hermes’ affluent customers wait for several years to buy a particular bag. The history and heritage of a luxury brand also bring out an element of authenticity (Fionda and Moore 2009). Luxury brands are associated with endurance and heritage, indicating that they are not simply influenced by the latest fashion fads, but focus on adapting traditions to create products that will last, maintaining the brand’s heritage into the future (Bendell and Kleanthous 2007). This artisanal quality and heritage of luxury brands can be associated with sustainability, as consumers do not want to throw away an item that is designed to become timeless. Therefore, luxury brands can become the leaders in sustainability because of their emphasis on this artisanal quality, heritage and craftsmanship (Joy et al 2012).

On the other hand, luxury companies have the problem to preserve the artisanship skills over time. Therefore, they have begun to invest in sustainable programs or build artisan schools to train employees in order to safeguard the artistic abilities of their personnel. For example, Brunello Cucinelli founded the “School of Craftsmanship” in Solomeo, where attendants learn mending, cutting and assembly, tailoring (Arrigo 2015). LVMH has created the Institut des Métiers d’Excellence in 2014 to ensure the transmission of its unique savoir-faire and promote careers in traditional craftsmanship métiers among young generations (LVMH website). Similarly, numerous Kering brands offer training programs to sustain some technical schools of craftsmanship (Arrigo 2015). By

investing in these artisan schools, luxury brands further support sustainability values and principles by developing craftsmanship, creative skills, and savoir-faire that can be passed on for centuries.

Luxury fashion is also associated with exclusivity and unique design aesthetic (Fionda and Moore 2009; Joy et al. 2012). Luxury brands connect with customers by making them feel special and unique (Danziger 2016). For many, luxury products embody a meaning and a story, which the fast fashion items often lack as they are regarded as throw away and stand for quick, available and cheap clothing. Whereas, luxury is considered aspirational, something that you cannot buy all the time; you need to save up for it. It has to be rare and exquisite, as it is often manufactured in small and limited quantities. This approach is contrary to the mass production of fast fashion retailers. Therefore, owning an exclusive, unique item from a luxury brand is both an aspirational dream and a desire. The notion of exclusivity and being accessible to only a selected few also signifies status (Joy et al. 2012). However, exclusivity today is less about limiting access. It is about making customers feel as a member of an exclusive community linked by shared values and ideals (Danziger 2016). This exclusivity and scarcity of luxury fashion items and relatively slower production cycles are in line with sustainability demands, as their consumption of environment and resources is also limited (Hennings et al. 2013; Kapferer 2010; Strategic Direction 2017).

Furthermore, unlike the fast fashion brands, cost reduction is not the main concern of luxury brands because consumers are willing to pay significant premiums for luxury brands that are expected to contain higher levels of quality, scarcity, taste and aspiration (Hennings et al. 2013). Therefore, luxury brands aim to create customer value through uniqueness and beauty of luxury items (Arrigo 2015). Thus, along with exclusivity, refined taste and beauty are important elements of luxury products for them to become aspirational. A luxury item should reflect and reinforce the consumer's individual aesthetic (Joy et al. 2012). Both Baudrillard (1969) and Wilson (1985) argue that fashion always has social meanings and aesthetic considerations. Similarly, aesthetics plays a key role in appeal and acceptance of eco-fashion (Joy et al. 2012). Winge (2008) also argues that eco-fashion signifies luxury and refined taste, taking into consideration the aesthetic aspect. On the other hand, aesthetics has not often been successfully employed in promoting sustainable fashion and becomes a barrier in its mobilization (Ozdamar-Ertekin and Atik 2015). Therefore, luxury brands can overcome this barrier and enhance the success of sustainable fashion brands by focusing on aesthetics, refined taste and exclusivity.

Luxury Fashion Brands as Initiators of Change in Supporting Sustainability

The adoption of sustainable practices often requires investing money and thereby increases the total costs. Luxury fashion brands are more likely to be able to cover these costs. For instance, luxury fashion brands such as Armani and Gucci have begun to pay more attention to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethical codes of conduct (Strategic Direction 2017). Louis Vuitton started the green supply chain initiative and issued a report on its water and electricity usage. Luxury fashion groups can further have an influence in creating environmentally friendly and ethical business models by using more sustainable materials, reducing waste in the production process and increasing the number of recycled items. Some luxury fashion brands and designers, such as Stella McCartney, Ferragamo, and Vivienne Westwood, are already making ecologically sustainable fashion clothing and accessories (Joy et al. 2012). Stella McCartney, for instance, is leading the way in focusing on sustainable practices. She built the world's first sizable sustainable luxury brand (Rickey 2014).

Kering Group, which owns high-profile luxury brands such as Gucci, Bottega Veneta, Alexander McQueen and Saint Laurent, is also working towards achieving a set of sustainability targets. The Group is known for its commitment to environmental and social sustainability. Marie-Claire Daveu, the chief sustainability officer for the Kering Group, said that Kering aspires to become the world's most sustainable luxury goods conglomerate, which will also help to show that ethical brands can actually be high fashion (Rickey 2014). François-Henri Pinault, the chief executive of Kering, explained the luxury conglomerate's aims towards discovering new, cleaner, smarter, and more humane ways of delivering products (Mower 2014). The 2025 targets of the group are in line with United Nations goals for sustainable development, including cutting carbon emissions by 50 percent and reducing Kering's environmental impact by at least 40 percent (Paton 2017). The Group further has an educational partnership with LCF Centre for Sustainable Fashion and promotes circular model of production in collaboration with H&M and Worn Again.

Celebrities and luxury brands can further help to raise consciousness and promote sustainable fashion. For instance, Livia Firth, the co-founder and creative director of Eco-Age, started the Green Carpet Challenge in 2009 by attending the Golden Globe award ceremony wearing a sustainable design. Green Carpet Challenge collaborates with

different well-known luxury brands such as Stella McCartney, Alberta Ferretti, Erdem, Burberry Prorsum, Prada, Moschino, and Tom Ford, and is supported by actors such as Cameron Diaz and Meryl Streep (Bursaloglu 2015). Godart (2015) argues that endorsement of sustainable fashion by celebrities can be a way to convince customers to pay more for better quality products.

“We live in a culture of fast fashion and consumer consumption. I think it is up to luxury designers to lead by example and create beautiful, thoughtful and responsible design... If designers demand better quality raw materials suppliers will have to make them. It is my hope that this creates a shift in the supply chain where more responsible raw materials are readily available.” (Melissa Joy Manning, Sustainable designer, *Ecouterre* 2014).

Eco-conscious jewelry designer Melissa Joy Manning, states in an interview that it is up to luxury designers to set an example by creating beautiful, thoughtful, and responsible design (*Ecouterre* 2014). Similarly, Styles (2019) argues that luxury brands are now leading a sustainability shift that can spread to the whole industry, as high street brands are likely to mimic the haute couture catwalks. Therefore, if luxury brands and designers start applying sustainability principles, the high street retailers that serve the mass market are likely to follow, which will prevent sustainability to remain only as a luxury trend. All the above examples show that luxury fashion can play a major role in the transition towards a more sustainable fashion system.

Role of Luxury Fashion Brands in Supporting Sharing Economy

Consumers' increased visibility in social media and desire for positive social impact increases the demand for new clothes. On the other hand, as addressed before, consumers have become more concerned with the industry's negative environmental and ethical impacts with the increased importance of sustainability (Strategic Direction 2017). Resale and rental channels provide practical and sustainable solutions to resolve this paradox, which has led to the recent rise of the resale and rental fashion markets (Lewittes 2019). Therefore, it is important to assess the role of luxury brands in supporting these new channels.

“People are embracing the rent-versus-own mentality to gain access to items they covet but could not afford.” (Shika Bondani, founder of Front Row, in O’Flaherty 2019)

O’Flaherty, in his column in *FTWeekend*, addresses that along with the rise in niche designers working with recycled textiles, consumers started to turn to the resale market for something cheaper and greener (2019). Despite the rising popularity of these channels, entering into the circular economy is not easy. In the State of Fashion 2019 report, Jennifer Hyman, CEO and founder of Rent the Runway explains that operating an efficient reverse logistics model is a big task, requiring technological and capital investments. Therefore, only a couple of large companies will dominate the centralized rental fashion industry. The two important names in this regard are Village Luxe, an NYC-based, invitation-only luxury rental company, and Designerex, an Australian peer-to-peer lending platform, which was launched in the U.S. in January 2019 (Lewittes 2019).

"Sharing at the peer-to-peer level and renting high fashion can help retailers. We would never say 'don't buy,' but buy smarter, better. Purchase pieces you love that will stay with you through many wears or items that can be shared and given to friends or loved ones." (Shanin Molinaro, Chief Marketing Officer of Village Luxe, in Lewittes 2019).

Village Luxe allows members to lend luxury items to each other through the platform. The company's growth shows consumers' increasing desire to participate in the sharing. Village Luxe's Chief Marketing Officer's explains how the model supports sustainability. Retailers and shoppers can focus more on each item's purpose, beauty and longevity, as access is valued over ownership (Lewittes 2019). Apart from their ethical and environmental benefits, luxury rental services are also more sustainable from a cost perspective. Lewittes (2019) states that "the fashion sharing economy allows us to reinvent our definition of cost-per-wear and look deeper into the story behind our clothes – who, what, where and how were they made?"

Designerex, on the other hand, allows both everyday shoppers and fashion entrepreneurs to rent and lend designer dresses through the platform. Designerex co-founder Kirsten Kore states that the rental company enables customers to satisfy their desire for luxury goods at an affordable price. Designerex enables shoppers to see luxury fashion items as assets rather than as wasteful commodities (Lewittes 2019). Farfetch is the latest company to enter the resale market, inviting its customers to sell their designer handbags. Even though these examples reveal the rising importance of resale and rental channels in luxury fashion to resolve the problem of overproduction and thereby support sustainability, the second-

hand market can also become a threat for the luxury brands by endangering their ability to sell at traditional full-price venues (O’Flaherty 2019). In this regard, it is important to discuss the barriers and challenges related to luxury fashion and sustainability.

Luxury Fashion and Sustainability: Barriers and Challenges

The relation of luxury fashion and sustainability is not simple. As Godart (2015) argues, the current luxury fashion can be sustainable but there are serious challenges. First, if we dismantle the term “luxury fashion,” it can be considered an oxymoron because “luxury” is often considered timeless, whereas “fashion” is, at least expected to be, short-lived. A luxury product like a watch or a piece of jewelry is often worn for years and can be passed on to future generations. However, a fashion product is most often used for a season. According to Frederic Godart (2015), “luxury fashion” product, such as a Chanel dress is no longer worn for years, not even after a season anymore. Traditionally, luxury was for rich and powerful people, but this has changed due to the democratization or massification of luxury. Artisanal luxury companies started to face the competition of large multinational corporations (Li et al. 2015). Considering the success of high street fast fashion retailers, the luxury brands started to have more collections than before and offer product lines and ranges that cater to middle class. Luxury, which was historically aligned with sustainability ideals (Kapferer 2010), by producing rare products of high quality, made by hand and with respect for tradition, has come to look more like consumer or fashion goods, made to become disposable after rapid obsolescence (Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2014). Therefore, the current luxury fashion started to embody principles of fast fashion (Ozdamar-Ertekin 2016) and part of the luxury industry is now acting like any fashionable mass retailer putting more strain on sustainability concerns. If the luxury sector targets more consumers, it might tempt people to invest considerable amounts of their disposable income in objects or experiences they do not need (Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2014). Therefore, it is important to consider the sustainability of this new form of mass luxury.

“Fashion is an industry that knows it’s unsustainable, and luxury is at the top of that value chain,” (Michael Stanley-Jones, co-secretary of the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion, in Williams 2019).

Luxury fashion brands face unique challenges given that concepts of luxury and sustainability may be conflicting (Lo and Ha-Brookshire 2018). Sustainability is based on respecting the environment and society, by valuing ethics, whereas luxury represents wasteful and thoughtless consumption for personal pleasure and showing-off (Achabou and Dekhili 2013). The meaning of luxury is diverse. Luxury items by definition may not be considered sustainable because they suggest non-essential purchases, needlessly expensive items, extravagance, life style of excess and self-indulgence (Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2014; Strategic Direction 2017), which are opposing to the principles of sustainability (Hennings et al. 2013). Therefore, the luxury industry is in tension between needing to sell a dream of excess and indulgence while assuring consumers, all these can be done without hurting the planet. Considering the growth rate of the fashion industry, particularly for successful brands such as Gucci, it is difficult to reduce this negative impact (Williams 2019).

Furthermore, even though the examples of luxury fashion brands and practices are increasing, they are still less than majority (Godart 2015). The luxury industry is perceived by experts and consumers to lag behind other industries in terms of sustainable commitment (Hennings et al. 2013). Luxury buyers consider luxury and sustainability contradictory, especially with regards to the social and economic aspects of sustainable development (Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2014). High quality and craftsmanship may allow a brand to charge a high price, but not all luxury brands are concerned about their environmental and social impacts. Therefore, some consumers are still skeptical about their sustainable offerings (Strategic Direction 2017). For instance, Burberry's annual report revealed that £28.6 million (\$38 million) worth of stock was sent to be incinerated in 2017. Even though the news has upset and surprised the investors and the consumers, destroying unsold stock and unused fabric is common for luxury labels. Becoming widely available at a cheaper price through discount stores discourages full-price sales and sending products for recycling leaves them vulnerable to being stolen and sold on the black market. Therefore, luxury brands are likely to destroy or burn the unsold stock in order to protect their exclusivity and preserve their brand equity. Richemont, who own brands including Cartier and Montblanc, also destroyed £437 million (\$572 million) worth of watches in the last two years to avoid markdown prices (Pinnock 2018).

Consequently, consumers who were used to associate pollution and waste in the apparel industry with fast-fashion retailers, now started to question the luxury companies as well. From using animal skins and cashmere wool to burning of unsold merchandise, the luxury industry is

under more pressure than ever before to prove its sustainability goals and practices (Williams 2019). Moreover, the globalization of luxury brands has led to further serious problems such as the widespread availability of counterfeits and consumer concerns referring to poor labor standards. Facing serious problems such as counterfeiting, fast fashion, the democratization of luxury and increasingly conscientious consumers, luxury brands must accept that sustainability has to become their fundamental responsibility (Hennings et al. 2013).

The main challenges for luxury brands with respect to sustainability are to revive artisanship and authenticity and to become more concerned with their environmental and societal footprints (Joy et al. 2012). Moreover, the consumers need to be convinced that sustainability adds value so that they will change their mindset about throwaway fashion. Both the brands and the producers need to communicate and explain the measures they are taking, so that consumers will not perceive their actions as green washing and they will be willing to pay higher prices for more sustainable clothes (Godart 2015) and invest in staple pieces that will last for years. However, most luxury brands target people with greater financial resources (Strategic Direction 2017) and if sustainability is only associated with luxury fashion brands, it will be not be accessible for the masses and will remain limited to a small group of wealthy consumers (Ozdamar-Ertekin and Atik 2015). Therefore, it is critical that high street retailers also support sustainability. In this regard, luxury fashion brands can act as role models and collaborate with high street retailers to have sustainable fashion brands and companies that are more affordable and that cater to larger segments. Consequently, sustainable fashion should not only be related to luxury.

Sustainable Fashion beyond Luxury

In the previous sections, the paper discussed both the values of luxury fashion that align with sustainability and the challenges and skepticism luxury fashion brands face with regards to sustainability, revealing that the relation of luxury fashion and sustainability is not straightforward. It is true that luxury brands are often criticized the same way as fast fashion brands (Kapferer and Bastien 2009), especially since the democratization or massification of luxury. However, luxury fashion can counteract some of these problems and criticisms by strengthening the values it embodies, which are in line with the principles and values of sustainability. They can act as initiators of change in supporting sustainability by meeting ethical and environmental standards, leading an example, educating and problem solving, and creating aspirational products. They can unite ideals of

fashion and sustainability by emphasizing quality, authenticity, artisanship, aesthetics and emotional value (Joy et al. 2012). Moreover, the recent economic recession initiated a return to the initial value of luxury, which is based on rarity, craftsmanship and artistry (Gardetti and Muthu 2015), which can further help to foster sustainability. Similarly, as Orsola de Castro argues, luxury fashion is sustainable as long as it ensures local artisanal skills and handmade traditions and is maintained and passed down through generations. Otherwise, it is a marketing tool or a trend, which encourages consumers to buy more, discarding quality, values, design and emotions, in favor of cheap, available, and standardized clothing (de Castro 2015).

Furthermore, luxury fashion brands are in a better position to pursue superior sustainability performance and achieve sustainability goals by managing their suppliers to comply with and improve social and environmental conditions, fulfilling the triple-bottom lines and consumer demands for transparency (Lo and Ha-Brookshire 2018). These aspects represent an opportunity for luxury brands to become leaders in sustainable fashion. Furthermore, regulations, which are important to ensure that sustainability standards and principles are met, will lead to inevitable price increases. Luxury brands are more able to absorb these additional costs and convince customers to pay more for better quality products (Godart 2015). Subsequently, luxury fashion can play a major role in transition towards a more sustainable fashion system.

On the other hand, it is also important to consider the fragmentation of the fashion industry. Sustainability in luxury fashion, for instance, is not the same as sustainability in fast fashion. Types of production have an impact as well. Manufacturing of artisanal craft is different from mass production (Joy et al. 2012). Arrigo (2015) refers to this fragmentation and provide important insights on how sustainability is employed in luxury and fast fashion retailers and thereby show that sustainability is not only limited to luxury fashion. Even though sustainability has a greater influence on the decision making of some consumers when buying luxury fashion items (Henninger et al. 2017), there is also skepticism. Some values of luxury and sustainability overlap but luxury and sustainability do not always relate to the same logics. Luxury fashion is not always sustainable and sustainable fashion is not always related to luxury. Everything sustainable does not necessarily have to be expensive as sustainability is not only about cost and exclusivity. Similarly, Jasmine Bina, CEO of a brand strategy agency Concept Bureau, believes that in 2018, exclusivity concept and meaning will start to be challenged along with luxury. Health, enlightenment, freedom, social and environmental responsibility will

become the new luxuries. According to Bina, that is the challenge that traditional luxury brands will have to struggle with in the near future (Pinnock 2018).

Sustainability is about having a value that people care about, trust and believe in. Fast fashion has taken this value away. People should invest in fashion because they genuinely care about it. They need to get this attitude back for fashion to regain its value. In this regard, sustainability and luxury fashion can work together. Therefore, instead of being regarded as contradictory, luxury and sustainability can be perceived as closely related concepts that inspire and complement each other (Hennings et al. 2013). The luxury brands that are traditionally based on high quality, superior durability, and deeper value are more likely to preserve social and environmental values (Hennings et al. 2013). Consumers still consider these 'true values' of luxury significant, which suggests that luxury brands need to promote their true values credibly to consumers so that consumers can perceive how those values are in line with sustainable development principles (Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2014). Therefore, in order to provide a roadmap for a better and a more sustainable fashion system, luxury fashion brands should not associate luxury fashion with only glamour and exclusivity. They have to foster deeper values of luxury that support social and environmental concerns and responsibility.

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